

terrorist cronies to Pakistan or Saudi Arabia before they have faced justice?

Closing Guantanamo Bay will not make Americans safer. It will not bring solace to the victims of terrorism. It will not make America more respected in the world. It won't solve the terrorist threat any more than repealing AUMFs will end their war against us.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Tommy P. Beaudreau, of Alaska, to be Deputy Secretary of the Interior.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF JOHN K. TIEN

Mr. CARPER. Thank you, Madam President. I hope you are well today. Good to see you and our staff.

I rise this morning to applaud the nomination of COL John Tien. He has been selected by our President to serve as the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, a very big job and an important job.

I have the honor of currently serving as the senior member and former chairman of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, which is responsible for, among other things, overseeing the operations of the Department of Homeland Security.

REMEMBERING MADELEINE A. PETERS

Madam President, very sadly, my colleague GARY PETERS, who is the chairman of the Homeland Security Committee, lost his mom this week, and he cannot be with us today. Normally, he would be here speaking on behalf of the nomination of Colonel Tien.

His mother, whom I know and personally and dearly—I have known her ever since Gary first joined us—she is a huge Detroit Tigers baseball fan, as am I. I had the pleasure of going with her to baseball games and considered her a kindred spirit.

I just want to, literally, as we think about Senator PETERS and his family this morning—I just want to ask, maybe, for a moment of silence to remember her and the Peters family.

Thank you.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(Moment of silence.)

NOMINATION OF JOHN K. TIEN

Madam President, as many of our colleagues know, the Department of Homeland Security is still a fairly young Agency, created in response to the attacks on September 11, 2001.

I vividly remember the tragic events of that day, a day as beautiful as today—sunshine, blue skies—and then the whole world changed, literally, while I was riding the train from Wilmington to Washington, DC. I recall also, vividly, how the Members of this body pulled together that day and our country pulled together that day. We, with the U.S. House of Representatives, we, with the President George W. Bush, set aside partisan politics, and we created the 9/11 Commission and adopted the great majority of its recommendations.

My recollection was the cochairs of the 9/11 Commission, former Governor of New Jersey, Tom Kean, a Republican, highly regarded, my neighbor across the river, and Lee Hamilton, Congressman from Indiana, who was chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee, one of my mentors—he was a Congressman years ago—they led a group, the 9/11 Commission. I think they came to agreement unanimously on 42 recommendations, passed them off to what would become the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. We adopted almost every one of them unanimously, and it did a lot of good for our country and provided a lot of protection for our country, for our homeland.

Among the recommendations that he made was the creation of the Department of Homeland Security and the expansion of our committee's jurisdiction to include homeland security. Before that, we were the Committee on Governmental Affairs, which is important. It was an oversight committee. But with the addition of the Department of Homeland Security, that responsibility grew enormously.

But since then, our committee has taken on a very different purpose. I am proud of the work that we have done that has made Americans safer today.

As someone who was very much involved in helping to stand up and assemble the Department of Homeland Security, I am proud of the way it has grown and matured over the last 20 years. I remain convinced that it is, in large part, the leadership provided by the nominees we confirm in this Chamber that enables the Department of Homeland Security to carry out successfully as its many missions.

The Department of Homeland Security is an Agency with a budget of over

\$50 billion and a staff of almost a quarter million men and women who are collectively responsible for protecting our Nation from many of the threats that we face. From the clear and present threats of both foreign and domestic terrorism to responding to cyber attacks on our critical infrastructure, to helping distribute relief and assistance in the face of natural disasters, there is no shortage of work to be done by that Agency and the men and women who work there every single day.

I often say that leadership is the most important ingredient to the success of almost any organization on this planet. In sports, in business, in government, our leaders set the tone at the top. They lead by their example, and they are the ones who guide their team to accomplish its mission, or, in the case of the Department of Homeland Security, its many missions. That is why it is crucial that the Department of Homeland Security have Senate-confirmed, qualified leadership at its helm.

After years in multiple administrations leaving key Senate-confirmed posts vacant or held on an "Acting" capacity for far too long, this Department needs qualified leaders now more than ever.

It has been without a Senate-confirmed Deputy Secretary for over 3 years. Let me repeat that. This vital Agency has been without a Senate-confirmed Deputy Secretary for more than 3 years. That has to change. With the confirmation of COL John Tien to serve, this body can do something about it, and we can do it today.

The responsibilities of the Deputy Secretary are daunting. Serving as a chief operating officer, the Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security is responsible for the day-to-day business of the Agency and the management of its operations and 250,000 men and women.

Colonel Tien is a proven leader and dedicated public servant. He is a retired U.S. Army colonel, whose 24-year career includes three combat tours in Iraq and national security roles in the Clinton, the George W. Bush, and the Obama White Houses. He has worked hand in glove with people from different perspectives and commands the respect of Republicans and Democrats alike.

For the past decade, COL Tien has been a leader in the private sector, where he has held senior executive roles in our Nation's financial sector and managed complex organizations and operations.

His nomination has drawn bipartisan support. Dozens of national security leaders and experts, including several former military and civilian government officials who served under Democratic and Republican Presidents, have expressed their strong support for Colonel Tien's nomination.

Just a week ago, the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, on which I serve, advanced his

nomination by a wide margin—by a wide margin, bipartisan support. Given Colonel Tien's past leadership experiences, I am hopeful that the Department will finally get the Senate-confirmed leader it needs and deserves in this critical post.

The American people are counting on seasoned leadership at the Department of Homeland Security after too many years of vacancies. I describe those vacancies as Swiss cheese, executive branch Swiss cheese, and that needs to end.

I applaud President Biden for nominating Colonel Tien. I encourage my colleagues to confirm him.

Let me say on a personal note to Colonel Tien and his wife Tracy—and they have a couple of daughters, Amanda and Rebecca—when you serve, as he did in the military for 24 years, rising to the rank of colonel, you don't just serve that as an individual. It is not just the officer or enlisted person who is serving. If they have a family—and we almost all do—the family serves as well. If they have a spouse, they have children, they serve as well. And we don't often acknowledge that, not often enough, at least.

I just want to take a moment to say to Colonel Tien's wife Tracy, to their daughters, Amanda and Rebecca, we are grateful for your service as well. And we are honored and privileged that you would share a good man in this new role for our country.

And to Colonel Tien, whose mother recently passed away, I understand, just a few months ago, from COVID-19, let me say that I know your mom must be looking down from on high today and feeling very proud of her son on this day and every day.

With that, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WHITEHOUSE). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CENSORSHIP

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, at the end of May, Facebook announced that it would no longer censor claims that the coronavirus was man-made. The mainstream media, which had savaged the story during the previous administration, suddenly started backpedaling, and the Biden White House, which had reportedly canceled the previous administration's investigation into whether the novel coronavirus originated in a Wuhan lab, announced a 90-day inquiry into the virus's origins.

The occasion for all this backpedaling was apparently a report in the Wall Street Journal that three researchers who worked at Wuhan Institute of Virology "sought hospital care" in late 2019 for symptoms consistent with the coronavirus. In the wake of

that report, it became impossible for the President or the mainstream media or Facebook to deny what had always been a plausible theory: that the virus came from the virology lab in Wuhan.

Journalists moved to explain their previous rejection of this theory, and some of them openly admitted what had been obvious: that they rejected the theory not because of flaws in the theory itself but because of those who had advanced this hypothesis.

We don't know what these revived investigations will ultimately show, but the Wuhan reversal illustrates multiple issues. One, of course, is the need to remember that our social media experience is heavily curated. The posts and ads we see are selected for us by complex algorithms that analyze the data social media companies have collected on each of us and curate our experience accordingly.

On top of that, as the past year or two has illustrated, social media companies actively censor certain material, meaning that there are posts we will never see.

As chairman and now ranking member of the Senate Commerce Committee's Communications and Tech Subcommittee, I have pushed for transparency requirements for social media companies, and I have introduced two bipartisan bills that would increase internet transparency while preserving the light-touch approach to regulation that has allowed the internet to flourish.

My Filter Bubble Transparency Act would allow social media users to opt out of the filter bubble—in other words, to opt out of the filtered experience tailored for them by opaque algorithms—and instead see an unfiltered social media feed or search results.

The Platform Accountability and Transparency Act, which I introduced with Senator SCHATZ, would increase transparency and accountability around content moderation. Sites would be required to provide an easily digestible disclosure of their content moderation practices for users, and, importantly, they would be required to explain their decisions to remove material to consumers.

Under the PACT Act, if a site chose to remove your post, it would have to tell you why it decided to remove your post. The PACT Act would also require sites to have an appeals process. So if Facebook, for example, removed one of your posts, it would not only have to tell you why, but it would have to provide a way for you to appeal that decision.

Let me be clear. Private entities are free to have their own opinions and viewpoints and should not be compelled by the government to publish alternative views, but that is not what we are talking about with these large social media platforms. Most strongly deny that they are publishers and instead hold themselves forth as neutral platforms for the free exchange of ideas from all corners. That is the promise they make to consumers.

The Wuhan reversal is more than a reminder that our social media experience is actually a heavily curated one. It also raises serious questions about censorship and the maintenance of the marketplace of ideas that is a hallmark of a free society. There is no free society without the free exchange of ideas. Freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, freedom to speak in the public square—all of these are essential elements of a free society. The more a government or other entities crack down on freedom of speech and the free exchange of ideas, the more we move away from a free society and toward tyranny.

I say "or other entities" because the responsibility for protecting the free exchange of ideas extends beyond the government. Government, of course, has an absolute obligation to defend our fundamental freedoms, but other institutions in society also have a role. You can't have a free society without free institutions. I am thinking here particularly of the press, universities, and in this day and age, social media companies.

If the press or social media companies only sanction one narrative—the narrative preferred by the government or by social elites or by any other group—the marketplace of ideas shrinks substantially. If multiple groups that should be fostering the free exchange of ideas combine to limit or advance a particular narrative, they start to control public opinion instead of allowing individuals to form their own opinions based on a free flow of information.

Unfortunately, as the Wuhan story illustrates, today we are seeing a real movement to restrict the free flow of ideas. Whether we are talking about speech codes or social media censorship, more and more, we are seeing a preferred narrative being advanced and opinions outside of that preferred narrative being censored or marginalized.

We see it in government with bills like S. 1, which would, among other things, allow the IRS to consider an organization's views before deciding whether or not to grant it tax-exempt status, or the Equality Act, which would crack down on freedom of speech and freedom of religion in unprecedented ways. We see it outside government when media outlets engage in selective reporting to highlight an accepted narrative instead of reporting the news and the facts, whatever they are, or when social media censors legitimate theories or stories or when universities crack down on free speech.

In the wake of the Wuhan lab story, we saw widespread censorship across government, social media, and the press for political reasons. President Biden seemingly shut down the former President's investigation into the virus's origin because it was the former President's investigation. Democrats in Congress pressured social media companies to censor information that contradicted the narrative that they